



Belmont Human Rights Commission Meeting
Belmont Town Hall
October 6, 2011
Meeting minutes

Members present: Carl Brauer, Fran Yuan (Chair) **Liaisons:** Kathryn Bonfiglio (BAR), Peter Hoerr (BPD) **Member of Public:** Charlene O'Connor, Barbara Watson

Meeting convened 7:05 pm

1. **Phone line:** There was one phone call from a known caller. Fran called back but never heard from the person. Fran will answer the phone line in October.
2. **Minutes:** A quorum was not present so the September minutes were not voted on.
3. **New members:** Barbara Watson attended the meeting and expressed interest in applying to serve as a member of the commission.
4. **Beech Street Center Project:** Fran brought everyone up to date on the video project at the center. A kick-off event will be held on Tuesday, October 11th at 4:30 pm at the center. A panel will present the project to BSC attendees with the aim of getting volunteers to be interviewed for the project. Food has been donated by seven establishments. There will also be a training for those interested in learning to use the video equipment. Fran gave a rundown on the types of questions that would be asked of interviewees by BHS student volunteers.
5. **Business cards:** Fran shared business cards that were made up for the HRC.
6. **BAR/HRC:** As a follow up to last month's meeting, it was affirmed that the two groups should continue to work together. Both are interested in bringing in new people to continue each group's efforts.
7. **One Book/ One Belmont:** Fran wanted someone to attend first OB/OB planning meeting at the library. Carl volunteered to do so with Barbara as a back up. There were a couple of books discussed and Carl said he would recommend Isabelle Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

8. Secure Communities Program: Capt. Hoerr presented information regarding the Secure Communities Program. While the Belmont Police Department does not currently participate in the Secure Communities Program, some time in 2012 the federal government will bring Belmont PD into the program. The Town will not have a choice in participation, since the program will use the police department's current electronic submissions of all arrestee data to the Massachusetts State Police and the FBI – name, date of birth, fingerprints, etc., taken during booking – and check that information against one additional data base that is maintained by Homeland Security. This check will enable Homeland Security to check persons arrested by local law enforcement for their immigration status and presence on terrorism-related lists.

Capt. Hoerr said that, since the Secure Communities Program works only off of arrest data, defendants brought into criminal court through other means (summoned to court, as is often the case for less serious crimes) are not subjected to these Homeland Security checks.

Federal immigration authorities then make determinations about what, if any, action to take regarding immigration violations. Capt. Hoerr provided copies of memoranda laying out the guidelines which federal agents are ordered to use in making their discretionary decisions about which immigration violations to prosecute and how to do so. He advised that there are special categories intended to shield victims of human trafficking and domestic violence in particular against deportation.

Although Governor Patrick has spoken out against the Secure Communities Program, it does not appear that Massachusetts can opt out of the program. Information about persons arrested in Massachusetts will automatically be shared with immigration authorities.

Meeting adjourned 8:40 pm